

The Publications of the Epigraphic Survey*

Charles F. Nims

The vision of an epigraphic survey in Egypt came to James Henry Breasted in the years bridging the halfway mark between Champollion's decipherment of the Egyptian hieroglyphic and the sesquicentennial of this discovery. During Breasted's first experience in copying inscriptions in Egypt in 1894/95 and in the Louvre on his return trip to the United States, when he made his start at gathering the original sources of ancient Egyptian history, and again during his first commission from the Royal Academy in Berlin to copy inscriptions in Italian museums for the Egyptian Dictionary, the program began to take shape. In 1899 he wrote, "I am now laying plans to copy not merely the historical but *all* the inscriptions of Egypt and publish them. . . . The only thing which could interfere would be the lack of money."¹

Though tempted through his acquaintance with Flinders Petrie and Theodore Davis to turn aside from this course and excavate, he was convinced that the publication of accurate copies of the inscriptions was "equally important, perhaps more so."² While he continued to collect material for the Dictionary he also made, for his own use, copies of inscriptions which were the basis of the translations in his

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The Survey's published volumes are *Medinet Habu (MH) I: Earlier Historical Records of Ramses III* (1930); *II: Later Historical Records of Ramses III* (1932); *III: The Calendar, the "Slaughterhouse," and Minor Records of Ramses III* (1934); *IV: Festival Scenes of Ramses III* (1940); *V-VII: The Temple Proper, Parts I-III* (1957-64); *VIII: The Eastern High Gate* (1970).

And *Reliefs and Inscriptions at Karnak, I, II: Ramses III's Temple within the Great Inclosure of Amon, and Ramses III's Temple in the Precinct of Mut* (1936); *III: The Bubastite Portal* (1954).

MH I, II, and IV and Reliefs and Inscriptions at Karnak I and II are elephant folios, 48 × 59 cm.; the others are folio, 38 × 48 cm. All are published by the University of Chicago Press.

1. Charles Breasted, *Pioneer to the Past* (New York, 1943), pp. 68-86, 108-10, 158 ff.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 163.

historical corpus.³ Some of these inscriptions are still unpublished. His efforts reinforced his conviction that “it was the supreme obligation of the present generation of orientalists to make a comprehensive effort to save for posterity the enormous body of ancient records still surviving in Egypt.”⁴

The funds for such an effort were long in coming. In 1919, through the generosity of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and with the cooperation of the President and Trustees of the University of Chicago, the Oriental Institute was founded. In the first announcement Breasted emphasized that the recovery and publication of the artifacts and written records of the past was not to be an end in itself, but the material for the study of ancient civilization.⁵ In 1923–24, while working on the Coffin Texts and with Howard Carter at the tomb of Tutankhamon, he made plans for the Epigraphic Survey as the start of the fulfillment of his dream of three decades before. The first task was copying of the scenes and inscriptions from the Mortuary Temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu; this began in the autumn of 1924.⁶ This structure was selected because of its fairly good state of preservation, because it had extensive scenes and inscriptions of historical importance, and because no other organization had plans to copy it. Later, after the Epigraphic Survey acquired new and larger headquarters on the east bank of the Nile, the temples of Ramses III at Karnak were included in the plan of work.

Writing in 1933, when the first two volumes of *Medinet Habu* had appeared, and when both the staff and facilities had been greatly enlarged, Breasted traced the history of the recording of inscriptions from Napoleon’s commission and Champollion’s work in Egypt through the end of the nineteenth century,⁷ and again emphasized the necessity of making copies as accurate as humanly possible.⁸ The first two seasons of the expedition’s work had been spent in establishing the process.

3. James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* (5 vols.; Chicago, 1906–7).

4. James Henry Breasted, *The Oriental Institute* (“The University of Chicago Survey,” Vol. XII [Chicago, 1933]), p. 196.

5. James Henry Breasted, “The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago,” *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, XXXV (1919) 196–204.

6. Breasted, *The Oriental Institute*, pp. 69 f.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 187–97.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 198.

Originally the staff consisted of Harold H. Nelson, field director and Egyptologist; Alfred Bollacher, artist; and John Hartman, photographer.⁹ Experience soon showed the shortcomings of the methods as conceived. The quarto format first envisaged for publication proved to be inadequate; the drawings were on too small a scale; the photographic equipment was hardly suitable for the task; and collation by one Egyptologist alone was unable to assure the needed accuracy. These deficiencies were corrected, and standards of epigraphy were developed largely by Caroline Ransom Williams, assisted by William F. Edgerton and John A. Wilson.¹⁰ The process of producing drawings, standardized by 1926, is essentially that still followed.¹¹

The present method of recording begins with a photograph of the wall surface; a whole scene is covered where practical. A view camera with a plate size of 8 × 10 in. is normal, but in unusual circumstances a 5 × 7 in. plate camera is used. The normal lens has about 45° angle of coverage; in places where the space is limited, as in most interiors, use is made of a wide angle lens with a 90° coverage, and in a few extremely narrow passageways resort has been had to a lens with a coverage of 140°. Great care must be taken to have the negative parallel to the wall.¹² Curved surfaces are traced and the tracing photographed. A meter scale is included in each photograph.

From the negative an enlargement is made on smooth mat double weight paper, medium contrast, developed in a low contrast developer. The maximum sheet size is 50 × 60 cm.; where required several sheets are used for one scene. When more than one negative is used for continuing parts of a scene or scenes, care is taken to match exactly the scale of the enlargements.

The artist takes the enlargement to the wall and, with constant reference to the relief, pencils in its outlines, noting also the painted patterns and damaged areas. In the studio the lines are gone over with

9. The successive members of the staff are named in the volumes as published.

10. Breasted, *The Oriental Institute*, p. 72.

11. See the description in *ibid.*, pp. 198–212, and in *MH I xi f*. The following summary is drawn from the experience of the author, a staff member of the Epigraphic Survey for more than a quarter century.

12. In a few cases the lack of parallelism in the photograph was not discovered until the work on the drawing was too far along to correct the error; see *MH V xi*, Pl. 335.

waterproof black ink; according to the choice of the artist either a pen or a brush is used. Solid lines are used to show the preserved carved pattern, dotted lines to show paint. Modeling of the figures, especially at the abdomen, knees, and ankles, is indicated. The damaged areas are shaded.¹³ When the artist has finished his work, the photographic image is bleached away, leaving a line drawing on a white background.

From this preliminary drawing two positive blueprints are made and assigned to an Egyptologist. He cuts one copy into small pieces and pastes them on legal size sheets of paper. He then goes to the wall and checks every detail against the relief, indicating corrections and additions on the sheets. Full attention is given to both the inscriptions and the figures. Following the first collation a second Egyptologist takes the same sheets again to the wall, indicating agreement or disagreement with and additions to the comments of the first epigrapher. After both epigraphers consult to settle any problems, the sheets are given to the artist for the correction of his work. Because photographic paper has a thin gelatin coating, the ink, when properly applied, lies on top of this. With care it can be etched away, and new lines drawn. All corrections are checked for accuracy.

Certain editorial work is done on the drawings, commonly the addition of line numbers to the inscriptions and a meter scale below the lower right edge of the drawing. After study, restorations are made, using a broken line. Where the sign on the wall is damaged but certain, or where previous copies show the sign once was there, no other indication of restoration is used, but where the additions are basely entirely on research by the Egyptologists, they are inclosed in square brackets. After such additions the drawing is ready for publication, but prior to printing changes can be made if further research so indicates.

13. Areas of solid paint have been shown in some instances, while in others only the edge of the painted areas have been indicated. For the former, see, e.g., *MH V*, Pl. 331, and for the latter, *ibid.*, Pl. 330. The second method now prevails. In shading, care is taken to indicate all lines between blocks where the covering plaster is lost, all damaged areas where once there could have been relief, and even in clear areas all holes which were made anciently but subsequent to the original work. At one time it was thought that it would be simpler merely to outline a break and use no shading at all; see *MH V*, Pls. 339, 340. Most of the staff found this treatment unsatisfactory, and now it has been abandoned.

In order to provide the necessary tools for research, the Epigraphic Survey began early to build up an Egyptological library.¹⁴ It is now one of the finest on the subject of Pharaonic Egypt. The Survey also has the necessary physical equipment for its task.

Because of the great amount of color still preserved on reliefs within the mortuary temple of Ramses III, certain scenes or selected parts have been reproduced in color. The soil on the walls, the depth of the reliefs, and the problems of lighting preclude the use of color photography even today. The artist painted with gouache on a low contrast photographic enlargement on single weight paper. Collation was made on black and white photographic reproductions of the painting. Cost has limited the number of color plates in the publications.

While line drawings can show the outline and details of the design of a relief, they cannot convey the three dimensional feeling achieved through a good photograph. In the first four Medinet Habu volumes the drawings frequently were supplemented by photographs, and there was occasional use of photographs reinforced by the artist.¹⁵ In the later volumes photographs were used as the sole means of publication where the relief was small in area and could be well lighted. Such photographs show neither the painted patterns nor traces of reliefs within an area of defacement which the Egyptologist at the wall could discern.

A line drawing should indicate, by the use of a heavier line, the shadow cast by light coming from the upper left, showing whether the relief is raised or incised. Unfortunately, the rationale of the shadow line was not worked out in the earlier drawings, so that in those published prior to 1965 the conventions were reversed as regards the main outline and confused as regards inner details. The staff long had been aware of the discrepancies but did not fully correct the placement of the shadow line until the preparation of drawings for volumes to appear subsequent to 1965.

At the start of the expedition it was planned that a translation of the texts, with full commentary and epigraphic notes, would appear soon after the publication of the plate volumes. This program was carried

14. For an account of the beginning of the Chicago House Library, see Breasted, *The Oriental Institute*, pp. 70-73.

15. Note especially *MH* II, Pl. 117, the wild bull hunt.

out only in conjunction with the first two.¹⁶ With *Medinet Habu VIII* the publication of translations was resumed and appear in the same volume with the plates.

In its over forty years of effort the Oriental Institute has carefully copied the reliefs from the Mortuary Temple of Ramses III, with more than 7,000 square meters of inscribed wall surface, and from other structures. Drawings for several more volumes are in press or in hand. The Epigraphic Survey is fully aware that there are other methods of publication of reliefs which are highly satisfactory for the study of the culture of ancient Egypt. It frequently has considered other processes of recording but has always returned to those which are traditional with it. It still believes, with Breasted, that copies must be accurate, and that in a copy the only acceptable accuracy is that as free as humanly possible from the errors of the copyist.

16. William F. Edgerton and John A. Wilson, *Historical Records of Ramses III* (Chicago, 1936).

The Epigraphic Survey 1973/74

Kent R. Weeks

Forty-nine years ago, the Epigraphic and Architectural Survey began its first season of work in Luxor, Egypt. Since then, it has achieved an enviable reputation for having produced among the most complete and accurate records of ancient reliefs and paintings yet published. In spite of many changes in equipment and personnel since 1924, the "Chicago House technique" and the Survey's commitment to accurate copies of important reliefs has continued, and the 1973/74 season of work has produced another fifty drawings that will add considerably to our knowledge of ancient Egypt and will insure that another group of important reliefs will endure.

This past season has brought to a temporary close our work on parts of the Temple of Khonsu. To date, more than two hundred plates have been prepared, and we expect the two-volume study of the courtyard, portico, and hypostyle hall to appear in the next year or

two. Work this season was largely a clean-up campaign to insure that these three parts of the temple were completely recorded, but several interesting features were found in these reliefs, among the most interesting being the recutting and restoration undertaken during Ptolemaic times. The scenes on each side of the doorway at the south end of the court have been subjected to both recutting and restoration. Beside the doorway are two long vertical inscriptions on the jambs that include the name of the High Priest of Amon, Pinudjem (or Painutem) I. These texts mention the work inspired by him on the pylon of the temple. Immediately to the right and left of each of these vertical inscriptions are five offering scenes, each depicting Pinudjem kneeling and making offering before various gods. The original version (two were discovered) shows Pinudjem in the dress and coiffure of an Egyptian king. Above his head is a sun disc outfitted with snakes or a vulture. In such cases, these emblems usually accompany and protect the royal personage as he makes an offering to a god. But here, in the second and final version of the scenes, Pinudjem wears the leopard skin of a priest instead of a royal kilt. The emblems above his head have been carved through with lines of hieroglyphs, and he has shed the king's headdress for that of priest. Thus, Pinudjem is represented first as king, then simply as high priest. A similar emendation is to be found in another scene recorded this year in the entrance to the courtyard where, again, the original carving of the royal costume was recarved to show the costume of high priest. The discovery, by our epigrapher James Allen, of a painted scene on a *hs*-vessel also confirms that there was a change from king to high priest.

One possible explanation of this change is that Pinudjem abandoned the royal office, but this idea is contradicted by other inscriptions in Khonsu temple: the vertical inscriptions, for example, give Pinudjem the title of King of Upper and Lower Egypt, but these titles were never altered as his costume was to that of high priest. That Pinudjem went from high priest to king and then back to high priest seems improbable, and the Epigraphic Survey will continue its research into this interesting problem next year.

We have also begun work on a newly acquired concession, the battle scenes of Seti I carved on the north outer wall of the Great Hypostyle Hall in the Temple of Amon at Karnak. These are superbly executed reliefs, filled with the kind of detail one might expect to see



Chicago House artist Grace Huxtable pencilling drawing of the reliefs of Seti I at Karnak. Photo by John Ross

on small-scale scenes, not on monumental façades such as this, and they are of great historical interest, both for students of the politics and battles of this Nineteenth Dynasty ruler and for those interested in the history of Egyptian art as well. The pencilling of drawings prior to inking and collation moved smoothly this season, and we have already completed over one-third of the Seti drawings.

Work at Seti I will be finished early in the 1975/76 season, and we therefore are already making application for permission to continue the work of the Survey at several other important sites. We have requested permission to record and clean the fascinating series of scenes in the Colonnade of Luxor Temple, which show, step-by-step, the activities of the Feast of Opet and which were begun by Amenhotep III and completed by later post-Amarna rulers. From an aesthetic standpoint these reliefs, like those of Seti, are of excellent quality, and their subject matter and chronology complement the work of the Survey in the Temple of Khonsu (where we have recorded another Opet scene)



General view of the north wall of the Hypostyle Hall at Karnak, where Chicago House staff members are now recording the important historical reliefs of Seti I. Photo by John Ross

and in several west bank tombs, notably Kheruef, recorded by the Survey under Mr. Nims. Perhaps more important, however, is the fact that these reliefs are rapidly deteriorating because of heavy salt incrustations on their surface; and, if cleaning and recording are not undertaken promptly, there soon will be very little left to record.

In addition to Luxor Temple, we plan to begin work on a small but important tomb on the west bank, belonging to a certain Nefersekheru (tomb number 107), who began his career as overseer of the palace under Amenhotep III and continued under Amenhotep IV. The changes in art style, titulary, and even burial place (Nefersekheru apparently abandoned his Luxor tomb in favor of another nearer Akhetaton) make this a fascinating set of reliefs to study, and they are an excellent complement to our work in the tomb of Kheruef. Nefersekheru's Theban tomb has never been cleared, and we also shall undertake a partial clearing of its interior during our first season there to discover whether additional decoration is to be found inside.

Finally, as an appropriate tribute to the fiftieth anniversary of the Architectural and Epigraphic Survey, we hope to reinstate the "Architectural" part of our name by preparing a detailed series of maps of archeological sites on the west bank. No such plan has been made since 1921, and, needless to say, there is much that has been discovered since then that needs to be included. We have secured the services of an architect-surveyor for this project and hope that we can produce not only a detailed set of plans but also a smaller handbook-size version for use by scholars in the field. This project, of necessity, will be one in which the cooperation of all missions working in Luxor is vital, and we are pleased to report that full and enthusiastic support already has been given the project by missions holding concessions in the area. We hope this will be only one of many joint cooperative ventures between the Survey and other expeditions.

Mrs. Grace Huxtable who, for seven years, served as artist at Chicago House, retired this season and will be replaced next year by Miss Clare Sampson. Those members who have had the pleasure of having met Mrs. Huxtable will know how much her good humor will be missed by our staff. Mr. Mark Ciccarello, one of our two student epigraphers, also will not be returning next season, and Messrs. Allen and Murnane will be joined by another Chicago graduate student. Messrs. Coleman, Lack, and Romer will continue.

As in past years, the Survey has received financial support both

from the University and from the foreign currency program of the Smithsonian Institution and the American Research Center in Egypt. Their support, and the talents of our staff, have made the fiftieth year of Chicago House a success and a good start for the future.